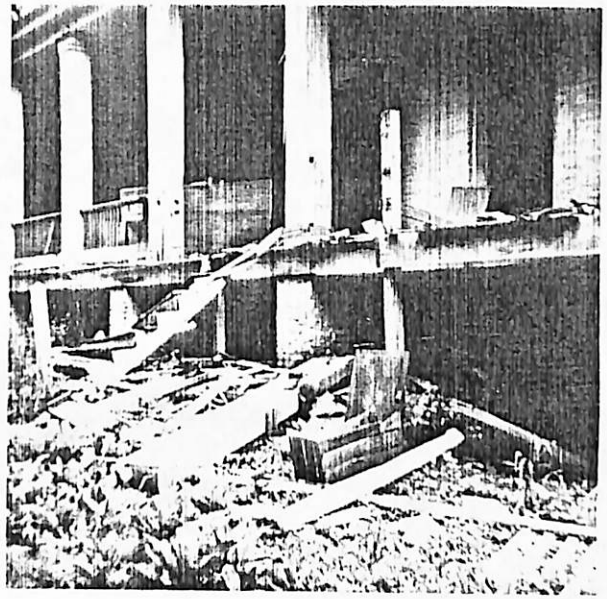
Courier-Journal Photo

HISTORIC FENLEY HOME BURNED LAST NIGHT



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Fire Destroys 101-Year-Old Fenley Farm Home

The 101-year-old Fenley farm home off Frankfort Avenue, until recently lived in by two elderly sisters who "hated the city," was destroyed by fire last night.

Only its 18-inch-thick brick walls remained standing.

The fire was listed as of undetermined origin, but many neighbors expressed the opinion it was started by vandals.

The house—on Fenley Avenue near the Masonic Widows and Orphans Home—had been unoccupied since early in 1957 when Miss Annette Fenley and Miss Frances Fenley entered nursing homes.

Miss Annette died at the age of 83 on July 7, 1957.

They were born in the home, built of bricks made on the place. The historic house, 50 by 40 feet, had 13-foot-high ceilings.

It was lighted with coal-oil lamps and candles, and heated by stoves and fireplaces. It had no City water or sewers.

Miss Annette said in an interview in 1948 that "my sister would never permit those city conveniences. We keep our home like it was in grandfather's time."

Sisters Fought Annexation In Vain

The two sisters unsuccessfully fought the City's attempts to annex the property. Circuit Judge William H. Field ordered it annexed in 1948.

The property was originally about 90 acres. John Fenley, a brother, sold about 30 acres to Green Tree Manor (now Seminary Village), an apartment project, in 1948.

About 1,000 curiosity seekers flocked to last night's fire, which was reported at 10:43.

Firemen kept the crowd back as showers of sparks sprayed the vicinity when the roof and second story fell.

The house, which once contained valuable antiques, since 1957 contained little of value and had been repeatedly broken into by vandals.

William Logan Fenley, 4836 Westport Road, a nephew of the sisters, said he had unsuccessfully attempted to lock the house to keep vandals out.

"It was the scene of one of the most flagrant cases of vandalism in these parts," Fenley said.

The house's 12-foot-wide front hall had a rare circular "flying" staircase that had no visible means of support. In the rear of the house is a brick laundry and a separate brick kitchen, both with second-floor servants' rooms.

There is a carriage house, an ice house, a two-story slave quarters, and a half dozen other outbuildings. The entrance is shaded by towering maple trees.

The buildings and land were appraised at $80,000 in 1957, Fenley said, and were insured for a "nominal amount."

Miss Frances Fenley was prophetic when she was quoted in the 1948 Courier-Journal story as saying:

"I hope this house and all the antique furniture in it burn down before outsiders live in it."